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SENT DEPARTMENT 361; REPEATED INFORMATION STOCKHOLM, OSLO
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Press announced today that Soviet Ambassador visited Prime Minister Sunday afternoon to inform him of a change in Soviet signatories of the turnover agreement for Porkkala scheduled to take place in Soviet Embassy January 26. Announcement had already been published that Soviet signatories would be Soviet Ambassador and Soviet commander of Porkkala base. Yesterday afternoon Soviet Ambassador informed Prime Minister that a delegation would come from Moscow headed by Pervukhin First Deputy Premier who will sign for USSR. Other members include Gromyko, Volkov and Marshall Vassilevski, Soviet group will arrive in Helsinki Wednesday.

Original plans had called for signature on Finnish side by Foreign Minister and a Finnish general. Kekkonen will now sign agreement for Finns. Press stated that information from Soviet Ambassador yesterday was a surprise to the Finnish Government.

I have confirmed that Finnish Government was completely surprised by this Soviet move. Finnish Government had from the outset desired a simple unostentatious ceremony and plans had been made along that line. There is considerable speculation about reasons for Soviet sudden change in announced plans. A simple explanation is that the Soviets desire to re-emphasize to Finns the importance of the Porkkala return which might otherwise be lost sight of because of Finnish eagerness to see the inside of the Porkkala district itself. Press comments that Vassilevski's visit will be the first time a Soviet Marshall has visited Finland. Some Embassy sources believe he may ask embarrassing questions and needle the Finnish military about the longstanding invitation from Bulganin for Finnish military officers to make official visit to Soviet Union.

HICKERSON

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